

Washington State Patrol Media Release

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WSU Studies: No Systemic Racial Profiling, Good Customer Service, at State Patrol

(Olympia)- Two studies just completed by Washington State University indicate that there is no systemic racial profiling by troopers at the Washington State Patrol, and that those who've had contact with troopers feel generally well treated.

Results of the two independent surveys were announced today in a series of media events across the state.

"I'm very proud of the men and woman who wear our uniform, and I'm frankly not surprised at this result," said WSP Chief John R. Batiste. "We've got great people, and have worked hard to develop a culture of respect."

In the study that looked for evidence of biased policing, WSU researchers reviewed different kinds of traffic stops. They counted stops initiated by radar, by aircraft and at night, all situations in which troopers were unlikely to know a driver's race prior to the stop. The researchers found little difference in daytime stops when the driver's race might be known. In both cases, the racial breakdown of those stopped, cited and searched generally fit the makeup of the local community.

The customer service survey indicated, among other things, that 82 percent of those who got tickets felt troopers treated them fairly.

"You must be doing something right if you're getting good marks from people who got tickets," Batiste added. "But if you're treating everyone you encounter with respect, that shouldn't be a surprise, either."

This is the fourth time the State Patrol has asked WSU to look for evidence of racial bias, and the eighth time the university has looked at how the public views troopers. It's the first time the two studies have been completed and released simultaneously.

Previous studies showed similar results.

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“Just by doing these surveys, and sharing them with the public, the State Patrol makes clear to its own employees that there is no place for bias in police work,” said Professor Nicholas Lovrich, director of WSU’s Division of Governmental Studies and Services. “We think we’ve done some very innovative things to make sure our conclusions are valid.”

In several cases, researchers photographed every car traveling along a road, to get the exact racial breakdown of motorists. They found the racial makeup of people who were stopped, cited and searched generally matched the motorists observed using that road. There were also no significant racial differences in cases where troopers used force, and when force was used, it appeared proportional to the situation.

The biased policing survey also independently verified data that troopers themselves report on each stop.

Doing the two surveys together did reveal one important area that the Patrol will address: while there is no evidence of systemic racial bias, the customer service survey did indicate that some minorities still believe biased policing exists.

“That shows we’ve still got some work to do,” Batiste said. “I want WSP to lead the nation in its practices, and then to make sure that all our citizens know they can trust us.”

The surveys are available on WSP’s web site at <http://www.wsp.wa.gov/reports/stopdata.htm>.

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